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BENJAMIN F. TRUEBLOOD . . . . . EDITOR.

COMPULSORY ARBITRATION.

Much attention has been given of late to the subject of arbitration as a means of settling labor difficulties. The *Arena* has published two important contributions to the discussion, one in the December number by Dr. Lyman S. Abbott, the other in the February number by Rabbi Schindler. Both these papers and many others in other papers advocate compulsory arbitration by the State and nation. Thought has been turned to this subject, as never before, by the recent outbreaks of trouble between employees and employers, and we do not wonder that the magnitude of the late disturbances has caused many students of social questions to seek some speedy and radical solution of such grave disorders. It seems as if something must be done at once to prevent the wreck of the social order. Compulsory arbitration appears at first thought, to be a radical and speedy and perfectly fair method of adjusting these quarrels, and hence its frequent advocacy.

It must be allowed that much can be said in its favor. Its apparent likeness to the processes of law in the courts gives it an appearance of great utility and practicability. We can not help thinking, however, that the argument for such forced arbitration is not nearly so strong as is thought, and we have much sympathy with the views expressed by an editorial in the Boston *Herald*, given on another page. The value of arbitration consists essentially in its voluntariness, in its being a free appeal to reason by two men or two sets of men. The very term compulsory arbitration almost involves a contradiction. When you force men before a tribunal and compel them to abide by its decision you have taken away the arbitral element. It may be justice, but it is not arbitration.

It is said in defence of the proposed compulsory system that we compel individuals to seek redress of wrongs in the court room. But there is much less compulsion about the processes of law than this assertion warrants. The State forces nobody before the courts except criminals, and in this case the crime is defined beforehand. In other cases, the State provides the courts, but does not compel persons to come before them. It does say that they shall not redress their own wrongs. If they seek redress, they must use the courts. This leaves a very wide margin of liberty in the institution of suits. An individual who has been wronged by another in matters which do not come within the scope of criminal law can compel him to answer before the courts, but he is not forced to do so.

If compulsory arbitration were instituted after the model of courts of justice, it is doubtful whether anything would or could be accomplished by it. The State would have to define the crimes for which either capitalists or laborers could be arrested. This would be immeasurably difficult if an attempt should be made to go beyond the crimes ordinarily established by common law. The fundamental difficulty in strikes and lockouts is usually not criminal at all in the primary stage. It is a difference of view as to wages or hours of work, or something of that sort, and no State would ever carry the idea of crime down to these differences of view. To undertake to compel capitalists and laborers to submit these differences to arbitration would take away all liberty and set up the most odious tyranny. These differences can never be adjusted in harmony with the spirit of our institutions except by the parties themselves, either directly or through the medium of some third party.

Courts of compulsory arbitration for the crimes and infractions of law which spring out of strikes and lockouts would be altogether superfluous, for all such crimes and trespasses, from the violation of contracts to the destruction of property and life, come already within the range of action of the common law and of the police regulations of the State. If these can not be made effective now, how is it supposed that they would become so in connection with the new laws and the new tribunals?

The evil under consideration is a very grave one. That employers or employed should be able through strikes and lockouts to stop the wheels of production and of exchange on so great a scale as is possible to-day, is certainly deplorable, when you consider the attending distress and animosity and waste. But it is difficult to see how compulsory arbitration could be employed to remove this evil without introducing an even greater one in its stead, by destroying liberty of contracts and putting the business of the people under a hateful system of government supervision. The true remedies lie in other directions, and are slowly but surely making themselves effective.

THE MILITARY ENCAMPMENT AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

We do not know who the "prominent member" of the AMERICAN PEACE SOCIETY is who has been urging Mr. George T. Angell, of the American Humane Education Society, to use his influence to prevent the contemplated military encampment at the Columbian Exposition. But whoever he is, he represents the general sentiment of the Peace Society on this subject, and we hope that he and all other members of the Society will continue to urge not only Mr. Angell but other persons of influence to try to prevent this proposed encampment. There is no conceivable reason why it should take place. It is not so much intended to be an assistance to the authorities of Chicago and Illinois in preserving order in possible emergencies, as it is to be a military display pure and simple.